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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 7640

BILL NUMBER: HB 1821

NOTE PREPARED: Feb 15, 2005

BILL AMENDED: Feb 14, 2005

SUBJECT: Medical Interpreters and Translators.

FIRST AUTHOR: Rep. Budak

FIRST SPONSOR:

BILL STATUS: CR Adopted - 1st House

FUNDS AFFECTED: X **GENERAL**
DEDICATED
FEDERAL

IMPACT: State

Summary of Legislation: (Amended) This bill requires the Health Professions Bureau to provide administrative support for the Commission on Health Care Interpreters and Translators. It changes the membership of the Commission. The bill also requires the Governor to make appointments to the Commission.

The bill requires the Commission to establish certification and registration qualifications for health care interpreters and translators. It allows a person who completes an approved hospital in-service program to be certified or registered. It also provides that a person who is not certified or registered may not profess to be a certified or registered health care interpreter and translator.

Effective Date: July 1, 2005.

Explanation of State Expenditures: (Revised) This bill shifts the Commission on Health Care Interpreters and Translators, created by P.L. 61-2004, from the State Department of Health to the Health Professions Bureau. The Commission is required to adopt rules establishing certification and registration requirements for health care translators and interpreters and related fees.

Health Professions Bureau: The Health Professions Bureau (HPB) provides staff support for the health professions boards. Revenues from licensure are received by the state General Fund and expenditures are appropriated to HPB with augmentation from the state General Fund. Because the agency uses the same resources to support different boards and committees, it breaks down its expenditures by function rather than by board or committee. For this reason, the individual cost of any board or committee is indeterminable.

According to HPB, the common operating costs among the licensing boards include: board member per diem, travel expenses, printing, postage, supplies, telephone charges and personnel. Additional staff, such as a PAT II and Secretary III position may be required to provide support for a new board. Start-up costs for a new board may be greater than the annual operating costs once it is established. Depending on revenue balances from licenses issued by all of HPB's boards, HPB could potentially absorb a portion of the operating expenses not covered by the health care translators and interpreters certification and registration revenue.

The funds and resources required above could be supplied through a variety of sources, including the following: (1) existing staff and resources not currently being used to capacity; (2) existing staff and resources currently being used in another program; (3) authorized, but vacant, staff positions, including those positions that would need to be reclassified; (4) funds that, otherwise, would be reverted; or (5) new appropriations. As of December 2003, HPB employed 56 authorized full-time staff members and had 2 vacancies (COMOT 3 and PAT1 positions). Ultimately, the source of funds and resources required to satisfy the requirements of this bill will depend upon legislative and administrative actions.

Department of Health: Removing the Commission from the Department of Health will reduce the agency's administrative burden. The agency will also save expenditures on the members' per diems and travel reimbursements.

Hospital Council: This bill also requires the Hospital Council to adopt criteria allowing licensed hospitals to offer a hospital in-service training program for health care interpreters and translators. The Council should be able to adopt the criteria using its existing level of resources available.

Explanation of State Revenues: The Commission is required to adopt rules establishing fees for the certification and registration of health care translators and interpreters. Presumably, fees will be set at a level designed to cover expenses. The amount of revenue that will be generated by this proposal is indeterminable, but will depend on the number of health care translators and interpreters who seek certification.

Penalty Provision: This bill creates a penalty and makes it a Class C infraction to violate the laws pertaining to health care translators and interpreters. The maximum judgment for a Class C infraction is \$500, which would be deposited in the state General Fund. However, any additional revenue is likely to be small.

Explanation of Local Expenditures:

Explanation of Local Revenues: *Penalty Provision:* If additional court actions are filed and a judgment is entered, local governments would receive revenue from court fees. However, any additional revenue is likely to be small.

State Agencies Affected: Department of Health; Health Professions Bureau; Hospital Council.

Local Agencies Affected: Trial courts, local law enforcement agencies.

Information Sources: Health Professions Bureau.

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